

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: THE FDP AND THE COALITION QUESTIONS IN HESSE

REF: BONN 7771

1. THE COUNTRY WIDE GENERAL DILEMMA OF THE FDP AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 6 OF REFTTEL CERTAINLY APPLIES TO THE STATE OF HESSE AS IT DOES ELSEWHERE. THE HESSIAN SITUATION IS COMPLEX HOWEVER, AND NOT QUITE AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 2A OF REFTTEL.

2. IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS OR SO THERE HAS BEEN A DECIDED SOFTENING OF THE HESSIAN FDPS PREVIOUS
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STONG STAND AGAINST A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN COALITION PARTNERS. THIS SOFTENING IS DUE TO SEVERAL REASONS PRIMARILY A) THE GROWING STRENGTH OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN THIS STATE ESPECIALLY AS SHOWN IN THE MARCH 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS, B) THE MORE MODERATE STANCE ADOPTED BY CDU CHAIRMAN ALFRED DREGGER AND, C) THE FADING INTO THE BACKGROUND IN FDP INTERNAL

POLITICS OF HEINZ HERBERT KARRY, HESSIAN ECONOMICS MINISTER AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MORE FLEXIBLE AND PRAGMATIC (PERHAPS EVEN OPPORTUNISTIC) EKKEHARD GRIES, INTERIOR MINISTER IN WIESBADEN AND HEEIAN FDP STATE CHAIRMAN. NEVERTHELESS A PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE HESSIAN FDP IN FAVOR OF THE CDU AS FUTURE COALITION PARTY IS NOT AN OPTION FOR THE FREE DEMOCRATS AT THIS TIME.

3. THE ISSUE TO BE DECIDED AT THE SPECIAL FDP CONVENTION IN FLOEHRSCHEIM ON JUNE 17 RPT 17 IS NOT BETWEEN THE SPD AND CDU AS A COALITION PARTNER BUT WHETHER TO DECIDE IN FAVOR OF CONTINUING THE COALITION WITH THE SPD OR POSTPONING A DECISION UNTIL AFTER THE OCTOBER 8 ELECTION.

4. THE DILEMMA OF THE FREE DEMOCRATS IS COMPLEX. ONLY ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF THE FDP VOTERS ARE SOLID TRADITIONAL PARTY SUPPORTERS WHO WILL GO ALONG WITH ANY COALITION DECISION MADE BY THE LEADERSHIP. THE REMAINING 70 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS NEEDED BY THE FDP TO GARNER THE MINIMUM 5 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IT MUST HAVE TO SURVIVE COMES FROM THE RELATIVELY SMALL GROUP OF UNCOMMITTED OR FLOATING VOTERS IN THE FRG. THE MAJORITY OF THE LATTER IN HESSE ARE THOUGHT TO FAVOR CONTINUING THE "SOCIAL/LIBERAL" COALITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH THE SPD BUT NOBODY KNOWS FOR SURE. THERE IS THEREFORE A PREMIUM ON MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION ON THE COALITION QUESTION WHICH MIGHT WELL BE TO POSTPONE IT JUST AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

5. THE FREE DEMOCRATS PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL IN HESSE IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY A) THE LIKELY RETURN TO THE SPD OF SOME VOTERS WHO HAD SWITCHED TO THE FDP IN REACTION TO THE SCANDALS OF THE OSSWALD ADMINISTRATION; B) THE POSSIBLE BUT NOT LIKELY EMERGENCE OF A "GREEN LIST" ENVIRONMENTALIST POLITICAL SLATE WHICH WOULD HURT THE FDP MORE THAN EITHER OF THE BIG PARTIES AND C) A DIMINISHING JUSTIFICATION FOR THE FDP AS A SUPPOSEDLY RESTRAINING FACTOR AGAINST LEFT WING SPD INFLUENCE IN THE HESSIAN ADMINISTRATION BECAUSE OF BOERNOERS OWN FIRM STAND AGAINST THE LEFT WING OF HIS PARTY.

6. OUR ESTIMATE BASED INTER ALIA ON PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH TOP FDP LEADERS IS THAT GRIES WILL ATTEMPT TO HAVE THE JUNE 17 CONVENTION DECIDE TO DEFER THE COALITION DECISION UNTIL AFTER

OCTOBER8 OR, IF THAT IS NOT FEASIBLE, TO WEASEL
WORD A DECISION IN FAVOR OF COALITION WITH THE SPD
AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO LEAVE THE DOOR
OPEN FOR A CHANGE OF MIND (OR HEART?) FOUR MONTHS
LATER.LEHMANN

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